DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 295 449 FL 016 623

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TITLE The Effective Supervision of Internship Experiences within Multinational Business and Foreign Language Programs.
PUB DATE Apr 86
NOTE 11p.; In: Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Eastern Michigan University Conference on Languages for Business and the Professions (see FL 016 586).
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Business Administration Education; Business Communication; College Second Language Programs; Evaluation Methods; Faculty Advisers; Higher Education; *International Trade; *Internship Programs; *Languages for Special Purposes; *Practicum Supervision; Second Language Instruction; *Supervisory Methods; Teacher Effectiveness; Teacher Student Relationship

ABSTRACT

Most students in multinational business and foreign language internships are applying their knowledge and language skills for the first time, and look to their faculty internship supervisor for encouragement, support, help, and correction of errors. They also regard the supervisor as the critical link between theory and practice. The faculty supervisor must help students establish realistic expectations and goals. His visits to the internship site and followup intern conferences are critical to effective supervision. In preparation, the faculty supervisor must learn as much as possible about the nature and responsibilities of the internship and schedule a series of site visits. The student should emerge from each visit with guidelines and suggestions for improvement from the faculty and site supervisors, as necessary. The faculty supervisor should observe and evaluate the intern's progress in a variety of internship-related areas and keep detailed notes about the student's strengths and weaknesses. Followup conferences between the faculty supervisor and intern, focusing on specific needs revealed in the site visit, help the intern to analyze what has already occurred in the internship, provide immediate support, and give direction for future efforts. (MSE)

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THE EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION OF INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCES WITHIN MULTINATIONAL BUSINESS AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

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The Effective Supervision of Internship Experiences in Multinational Business and Foreign Language Programs

By Barney T. Raffield, III

Introduction

Internship experiences are becoming an increasingly more critical component of academically sound multinational business and foreign language programs. Faculty in such programs are generally highly competent classroom teachers but lack the skills and training necessary for effective internship supervision. The purpose of this paper is to provide some practical guidelines by which multinational business and foreign language internships can be effectively supervised. The supervisory function will be placed in the context of an internship learning experience, and then proper procedures for conducting supervisory visits to the internship site and follow-up supervisory conferences with the intern will be explored.

The great majority of students involved in multinational business and foreign language program internships are utilizing and applying for the first time the business knowledge and the language skills which they have acquired in the classroom. Therefore, these students look to their faculty internship supervisor for encouragement, support, helpful instruction, correction of practice errors, and willingness to listen to and be involved in both their progress and their problems. They also tend to regard the faculty internship supervisor as the critical link between the certainty of the theory which they have learned in the classroom and the uncertainty of the applications of that theory which lie ahead.

The Nature of Supervising in Internship Settings

Supervision focuses upon the acquisition and utilization of knowledge, and the application of skills to actual practice. It is essentially a teaching activity, and the assumption is that the intern learns by doing and

by integrating his or her feelings, intellect and performance. The intern-faculty supervisor relationship is the fundamental catalyst in on-the-job learning situations. Positive learning takes place as a result of a positive relationship. A positive intern-faculty supervisor relatonship seems to be best achieved when the intern participates actively in his or her own learning, and when the faculty supervisor has confidence in the intern's abilities, judgments, strengths, and personal and professional worth. A regard for the intern as both learner and person, combined with a trained and disciplined mind, enable the internship faculty supervisor to be a highly positive influence in the growth and development of the intern during the internship experience (Skidmore and Thackeray 1982).

Any internship program must provide the intern with the opportunity for learning in theoretical, practical, cognitive, and affective ways. The learning experiences during the internship must be related to the theory learned in the classroom both prior to and following the internship component of a curriculum. The internship experience must provide both challenge and an opportunity for the intern to test himself or herself in a new learning situation. The faculty supervisor must help students to establish realistic expectations and goals for the internship, and the faculty supervisor's active planning for and participation in supervisory visits to the internship site and follow-up supervisory conferences with the intern are critically important components in the effective supervision of individual internship experiences (Matson 1971).

Supervisory Visits to the Internship Site

The primary purpose of supervisory visits to the internship site by the internship faculty supervisor is to ensure a quality learning experience for the multinational business and foreign language program intern, or in other words, to verify and to document that the intern is indeed applying his or her

language skills, international cultural understanding, and knowledge of multinational business theory to actual industrial situations. Careful planning and study must by necessity precede the supervisor's visit to the internship site, or the intern might justifiably resent being evaluated by someone who does not seem to comprehend the nature and responsiblites of the internship and who seems merely to drift in and out of the internship location out of obligation, rather than out of a genuine interest in this component of the educational process.

In planning for an effective supervisory visit the internship faculty supervisor should learn as much about the nature and responsiblities of the internship as possible. Much of this information should be available in the supervisor's copy of the intern's "learning agreement" (See Raffield 1985), which outlines what goals the intern plans to accomplish during his or her internship, and exactly how these goals are to be achieved. The supervisor should also review records of any previous site visits and follow-up conferences so as to be aware of specific areas which need further observation and evaluation. The supervisor must have a clear self-understanding of the purpose of his or her site visit and must communicate this purpose to the intern. Prior to any supervisory visit, the supervisor needs to set up a time for a follow-up conference with the intern, and such conferences frequently occur at the internship site at the conclusion of the supervisory visit. The preparation of a monthly calendar of scheduled supervisory visits and conferences will enable the supervisor to budget his or her time more effectively and provide a mechanism through which the supervisor will know when and for how long he or she will be involved in the internship supervisory process.

Interns typically desire supervision that is well planned, constructive in nature, and democratically applied. Supervisory visits should examine all

the elements within the internship experience, and not merely the intern. They should be instructional and supportive in nature so as to reinforce the positive aspects of the internship as a type of non-classroom learning. Each intern should have specific guidelines and suggestions for improvement in performance as a result of the supervisory visit, and these guidelines and suggestions should be offered not only by the faculty supervisor, but by the site (on-the-job) supervisor as well. Of course, the site supervisor has the opportunity to make such recommendations on a daily basis, and not only during faculty supervisory visits and follow-up conferences to which he or she is invited. Interns should be encouraged to interact freely with both the faculty supervisor and the site supervisor in discussing internship-related problems and in offering suggestions to improve the quality of his or her internship experience.

The frequency and duration of faculty supervisory visits will generally be determined by both the purpose of the visit and the initiator of the visit. General supervisory visits will typically not last over one hour, while supervisory visits to monitor specific situations or to provide counseling on atypical matters will take more time. If the faculty supervisor initiates the visit, one visitation per month is generally adequate; whereas, if the visit is initiated by the intern, the visitatons are made as frequently as such requests arise. Spears (1953) stated that a regular program of visitation is indicated for internship experiences, and that fear of supervision often results from the fact that visits are infrequent or improperly handled.

During any site visit, the faculty supervisor should be involved in observing, monitoring, evaluating, and recording the intern's progress in a variety of internship-related phenomena. Such phenomena would include oral and written fluency in the foreign language being utilized, proper grammatical usage in speaking and writing the foreign language in question, a

demonstration of understanding of the nature and responsiblities of the internship, progress toward meeting the objectives of the internship through the use of appropriate strategies and tactics as outlined in the "learning agreement" which was developed and approved prior to the actual internship experience, interaction and ease with peers and supervisors on the job, types of problems associated with internship responsibilities and how these problems are being handled, personal attitude toward the work experience and the specific duties assigned, and proper utilization of theories and operational proecedures learned in business administration classes. Supervision of this last internship area is generally best accomplished through the faculty supervisor's close consultation with both the site supervisor and appropriate business administration faculty.

In preparation for the follow-up supervisory conference with the intern, the faculty supervisor should keep detailed notes as to the strengths and weaknesses of the intern and his or her performance on the job. These notes should be made in private and out of the view of the intern being supervised. As pointed out previously, the focus of such notes should be on the quality and educational value of the internship itself, and not on the intern specifically. These notes will be extremely helpful both to the faculty supervisor and to the intern during the follow-up conference, and particularly in cases where the post-visit conference does not immediately follow the supervisory site visit.

Follow-up Supervisory Conferences with the Intern

Kyte (1952) has stated that a follow-up conference between a faculty supervisor and an intern seeks the production of cooperative planning as its goal, and not the supervisor's imposition of a plan on the intern. A meaningful supervisory conference not only provides the intern with an analytical review of what has occurred at that point in the internship, but

also provides major support for the present and a well defined sense of purpose and direction for the future. The intern's ability to perform self-analysis and self-appraisal should be enhanced during any supervisory conference.

Kadushin (1976) has suggested that the faculty supervisor must help the intern to take some order and meaning from his or her on-the-job experience. The faculty supervisor can help the intern identify those principles that can provide him or her with an understanding of what he or she needs to do to improve the quality, both academically and professionally, of what he or she is experiencing during the internship. This critical task is accomplished through the faculty supervisor's asking questions, requesting clarification, freeing, supporting, stimulating, affirming, directing, challenging, and supplementing the intern's thinking. The faculty supervisor must call attention to intern errors in performance, missed opportunities, apparent misunderstandings, gaps, and inconsistencies; and he or she introduces new ideas, shares relevant knowledge and experience, and explains and illustrates similarities and differences between this situation and others, thus enlarging the intern's perspective. Finally, the faculty supervisor should pose relevant alternatives for the intern's consideration (p. 167).

Supervisory conferences are generally held following a faculty supervisor's visit to the internship site, when the intern requests an individual meeting with the faculty supervisor, and when the faculty supervisor desires to discuss a particular problem area with the intern. Just as was true with supervisory site visits, great care and planning must be a prerequisite to carrying on a successful supervisory conference. In preparing for a conference with the intern, the faculty supervisor should review all notes and records pertinent to the conference (particularly those related to the supervisory site visit), develop an agenda for the conference that will

effectively and efficiently address all relevant supervisory and internship-related issues, review and assemble additional professional materials that will be of assistance to the intern, arrange for a convenient and suitable time and location for the conference, remind all paricipants of the conference time and place, and plan to provide simple refreshments to add an air of informality and comfort to the meeting. Whenever possible, the internship site supervisor and any other relevant individual should be invited to the conference to solicit their remarks and suggestions.

Supervisory conferences, if at all possible, should occur as quickly after a supervisory site visit as possible so as to promote the best relevant interaction among all parties involved. Conferences should be scheduled for a time period which offers ample time for issues to be raised, discussed, and acted upon. The conference location should be a mutually agreed upon site, and often at the internship site to promote efficiency, timeliness, and intern comfort; and the location should insure privacy and ego protection for all participants.

During the conference, the faculty supervisor should strive to be pleasant, to listen carefully, to facilitate meaningful interaction among all participants, to share the responsibility of reviewing and analyzing the intern's progress to date, to offer helpful suggestions to the intern as to internship-related issues, to keep adequate records of plans and suggestions, to make certain that all relevant issues have been addressed and acted upon, and to summarize all findings, conclusions, and decisions in a written report which is made available to all parties involved. Hopefully these suggestions will help to make the supervisory conference more informative, constructive, pleasant, and empowering.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to provide helpful suggestions through which the internship faculty supervisor can efficiently and effectively help the student intern in multinational business and foreign language programs to derive the most academic and professional benefit from his or her internship experience. It is hoped that the suggestions included herein will help to simplify the arduous task of internship supervision which confronts faculty members involved in multinational business and foreign language education, both in the United States and throughout the world.

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